

formerly served as president of vaccinations for Merck, where he ignored warnings about thimerosal's risks.

In May of last year, the Institute of Medicine issued its final report. Its conclusion: There is no proven link between autism and thimerosal in vaccines. Rather than reviewing the large body of literature describing the toxicity of thimerosal, the report relied on four disastrously flawed epidemiological studies examining European countries, where children received much smaller doses of thimerosal than American kids. It also cited a new version of the Verstraeten study, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, that had been reworked to reduce the link between thimerosal and autism. The new study included children too young to have been diagnosed with autism and overlooked others who showed signs of the disease. The IOM declared the case closed and—in a startling position for a scientific body—recommended that no further research be conducted.

The report may have satisfied the CDC, but it convinced no one. Rep. David Weldon, a Republican physician from Florida who serves on the House Government Reform Committee, attacked the Institute of Medicine, saying it relied on a handful of studies that were "fatally flawed" by "poor design" and failed to represent "all the available scientific and medical research." CDC officials are not interested in an honest search for the truth, Weldon told me, because "an association between vaccines and autism would force them to admit that their policies irreparably damaged thousands of children. Who would want to make that conclusion about themselves?"

Under pressure from Congress, parents and a few of its own panel members, the Institute of Medicine reluctantly convened a second panel to review the findings of the first. In February, the new panel, composed of different scientists, criticized the earlier panel for its lack of transparency and urged the CDC to make its vaccine database available to the public.

So far, though, only two scientists have managed to gain access. Dr. Mark Geier, president of the Genetics Center of America, and his son, David, spent a year battling to obtain the medical records from the CDC. Since August 2002, when members of Congress pressured the agency to turn over the data, the Geiers have completed six studies that demonstrate a powerful correlation between thimerosal and neurological damage in children. One study, which compares the cumulative dose of mercury received by children born between 1981 and 1985 with those born between 1990 and 1996, found a "very significant relationship" between autism and vaccines. Another study of educational performance found that kids who received higher doses of thimerosal in vaccines were nearly three times as likely to be diagnosed with autism and more than three times as likely to suffer from speech disorders and mental retardation. Another soon-to-be-published study shows that autism rates are in decline following the recent elimination of thimerosal from most vaccines.

As the federal government worked to prevent scientists from studying vaccines, others have stepped in to study the link to autism. In April, reporter Dan Olmsted of UPI undertook one of the more interesting studies himself. Searching for children who had not been exposed to mercury in vaccines—the kind of population that scientists typically use as a "control" in experiments—Olmsted scoured the Amish of Lancaster County, Penn., who refuse to immunize their infants. Given the national rate of autism, Olmsted calculated that there should be 130 autistics among the Amish. He found only four. One had been exposed to high levels of

mercury from a power plant. The other three—including one child adopted from outside the Amish community—had received their vaccines.

At the state level, many officials have also conducted in-depth reviews of thimerosal. While the Institute of Medicine was busy whitewashing the risks, the Iowa Legislature was carefully combing through all of the available scientific and biological data. "After three years of review, I became convinced there was sufficient credible research to show a link between mercury and the increased incidences in autism," says state Sen. Ken Veenstra, a Republican who oversaw the investigation. "The fact that Iowa's 700 percent increase in autism began in the 1990s, right after more and more vaccines were added to the children's vaccine schedules, is solid evidence alone." Last year, Iowa became the first state to ban mercury in vaccines, followed by California. Similar bans are now under consideration in 32 other states.

But instead of following suit, the FDA continues to allow manufacturers to include thimerosal in scores of over-the-counter medications as well as steroids and injected collagen. Even more alarming, the government continues to ship vaccines preserved with thimerosal to developing countries—some of which are now experiencing a sudden explosion in autism rates. In China, where the disease was virtually unknown prior to the introduction of thimerosal by U.S. drug manufacturers in 1999, news reports indicate that there are now more than 1.8 million autistics. Although reliable numbers are hard to come by, autistic disorders also appear to be soaring in India, Argentina, Nicaragua and other developing countries that are now using thimerosal-laced vaccines. The World Health Organization continues to insist thimerosal is safe, but it promises to keep the possibility that it is linked to neurological disorders "under review."

I devoted time to study this issue because I believe that this is a moral crisis that must be addressed. If, as the evidence suggests, our public-health authorities knowingly allowed the pharmaceutical industry to poison an entire generation of American children, their actions arguably constitute one of the biggest scandals in the annals of American medicine. "The CDC is guilty of incompetence and gross negligence," says Mark Blaxill, vice president of Safe Minds, a nonprofit organization concerned about the role of mercury in medicines. "The damage caused by vaccine exposure is massive. It's bigger than asbestos, bigger than tobacco, bigger than anything you've ever seen." It's hard to calculate the damage to our country—and to the international efforts to eradicate epidemic diseases—if Third World nations come to believe that America's most heralded foreign-aid initiative is poisoning their children. It's not difficult to predict how this scenario will be interpreted by America's enemies abroad. The scientists and researchers—many of them sincere, even idealistic—who are participating in efforts to hide the science on thimerosal claim that they are trying to advance the lofty goal of protecting children in developing nations from disease pandemics. They are badly misguided. Their failure to come clean on thimerosal will come back horribly to haunt our country and the world's poorest populations.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my time out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING—PROVIDING INDEPENDENT FAMILY PROGRAMMING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and its contributions to our shared American experience.

On November 7, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, creating the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and bringing about the genesis of one of our Nation's most cherished educational and cultural institutions.

Before signing the bill, President Johnson presented his vision for this new public communications enterprise, stating that the "time had come to enlist the computer and the satellite, as well as the television and the radio, and to enlist them in the cause of education."

Since Congress created this not-for-profit entity, it has become one of the most relied-upon sources of news and educational programming for all Americans, especially for our children.

Mr. Speaker, as the father of two small children, I can speak directly to the love that our kids have for educational programming, such as *Sesame Street*, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, *Arthur*, *Clifford the Big Red Dog*. They have captured the imaginations and challenged the minds of our children for decades. In fact, these programs are also a hit with parents, and often present the only alternative to inappropriate daytime programming that is available on network and for-profit television stations.

The mission of the Public Broadcasting Act was realized when the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, CPB, created the nonprofit Public Broadcasting Service in 1969 and the National Public Radio in 1970. American families now had television and radio stations they could call their own.

Much like the Chamber in which we stand, the people's House, these airwaves and programming supported by the CPB also belong to the individuals we have the privilege to represent in Congress, and I have heard from hundreds of my constituents who have shared personal stories of the impact of PBS and NPR on their lives and the lives of their children.

KPCC, for example, in my district is just one of the many superb affiliates of NPR around the Nation. My constituents rely on KPCC, as they do on public broadcasting generally for news, informational programming, and educational programming for their kids;

and I applaud the significant contributions they have made and others and the individual public broadcasting stations.

The legislation brought before the House today would have effectively gutted this fine institution of critical funding necessary to accomplish the vision laid out by President Johnson. The base bill would have cut a staggering \$100 million, stripping the Corporation for Public Broadcasting of one-quarter of its funding.

Critics maintain that the CPB has strayed from its mandate of independence and impartiality. In fact, polls show a large majority of Americans think that the news and information programming is more trustworthy, more independent than that of network and cable programming. A majority of viewers also think PBS is a valuable educational and cultural resource. A poll commissioned by the board of directors confirmed that 48 percent of those surveyed believe that funding for public broadcasting should be increased, not decreased.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, am concerned about the independence of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; and today, I reluctantly join with many of my colleagues in calling on the President to ask for the resignation of chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Kenneth Tomlinson. Mr. Tomlinson has actively sought to undermine, underfund, and ultimately dismantle the very organization he has been appointed to lead.

As the leader of CPB, Mr. Tomlinson should be advocating for the continued vitality of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Instead, he seems bent on politicizing its content, undermining the objectivity of its news analysis, and turning it into yet another partisan organ. Mr. Tomlinson has withheld publicly funded polls that show strong support for public broadcasting, and more recently, expressed his desire to nominate Patricia Harrison as the new president.

The nomination of Ms. Harrison, a former cochair of the Republican National Committee, further calls into question the impartiality of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and flies in the face of the mandate of President Johnson that the corporation was to be carefully guarded from government and party control. Mr. Tomlinson, regrettably, has not proved to be a good steward of the immense public trust placed in his charge.

Mr. Speaker, on that day in 1967, President Johnson had high hopes for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and said, "Today we rededicate a part of the airwaves, which belong to all the people, and we dedicate them for the enlightenment of all the people."

Today, I am proud we have beaten back this assault on public broadcasting and taken an important step to renew our commitment to public broadcasting and restore the funding

and independence necessary to ensure that our children and their children will continue to enjoy quality, independent public broadcasting.

SUPPORTING CLEAR LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, next week I will introduce legislation that received wide bipartisan support in the last Congress, the Clear Law Enforcement for Removal of Criminal Illegal Aliens Act, better known as CLEAR.

This bill seeks to address a major crisis in our country: the lack of enforcement of our immigration laws.

The CLEAR Act makes clear that State and local law enforcement can and should help Federal agencies enforce these laws.

We have no problem asking local law enforcement to help enforce Federal drug laws. We have no problem asking local agencies to help in Federal man-hunts for murderers and terrorists. We even have no problem with deputy and police enforcing Federal laws against cigarette sales to minors.

Yet when the issue of immigration enforcement arises, so do the squeals that immigration is a Federal responsibility and should not be pushed off on the States. They are right. It is a Federal responsibility. The problem is that the Federal Government is not taking their responsibility very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, the catastrophe of illegal immigration has already been pushed off on the States by the Federal Government flatly refusing to do its duty of enforcing the law. Our police and deputies spend billions combating illegal immigrant crime, including organized foreign gangs. This could have been prevented by vigorous Federal enforcement at the border.

Our local jails are full of criminal illegal aliens, costing the States billions per year. This could have been prevented by vigorous Federal enforcement at the border.

Our local hospital emergency rooms are full of indigent illegal aliens who drive up the cost of health care to a point that hardworking Americans can basically no longer afford it. This could have been prevented by vigorous Federal enforcement at the border.

Our local schools are filled with children of illegal immigrants who pay little or no local taxes, but drive up property taxes for hardworking American families to cover the skyrocketing costs of bilingual and special education. This could have been prevented by vigorous Federal enforcement at our borders.

Our police routinely find illegals, including those with criminal records. They call the Federal Government, which does nothing other than force our police to release these criminals back on to our streets. There are about 500,000 of them out there.

This has got to stop, and this is a fair bill, and it is intended to stop that.

Washington had its chance to enforce the law, and it has failed the Nation. Now it is time we stop putting obstacles in the way of our police, deputies, and State patrol helping to get this job done.

Under the CLEAR Act, local law enforcement is authorized to not only arrest illegal aliens but to transport them to the nearest Federal detention centers, including across State lines; and if DHS does not pick them up immediately, under CLEAR, the Federal Government pays the tab for that, as appropriate.

CLEAR authorizes new Federal resources to support local law enforcement, including immigration law training, 20 new Federal detention centers and more if they are needed.

The CLEAR Act makes illegal immigration a criminal offense, not just a civil offense. Repeat offenders will face serious jail time, not a free ride back to the border.

Mr. Speaker, next week this House will have a chance to start getting serious about fighting our national crisis of illegal immigration. I urge every Member in this House to join us as an original cosponsor.

SMART SECURITY AND THE NEED FOR AN IRAQ PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to take a good hard look at the role the United States is playing in Iraq and whether it is in our national interests to maintain a military presence there.

We need to acknowledge the fact that Iraq's insurgency is growing in strength, not diminishing. It is the very presence of our 150,000-or-so American troops in Iraq that unites the growing collection of insurgent forces.

Since our military presence encourages further fighting, this war will continue as long as the United States troops remain in Iraq, appearing to be occupiers of their country. That is why Congress must accept that we cannot possibly be successful through military means alone.

During consideration of the defense authorization bill on May 25 for fiscal year 2006, I offered an amendment urging the President to develop a plan for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Surprisingly, this is the first time the House formally debated the possibility of withdrawal from Iraq, and that was over a 2-year period. While my amendment was defeated, it is clear that Congress is starting to get serious about the need to end the war in Iraq. 128 Members, including five Republicans, voted for this important amendment, but there is much more work to be done.

The Iraq war has now raged on for more than 2 years, and we are no closer